

The long-awaited Ballinasloe Omniplex Theatre has finally opened to the public, with the cinema staff directing filmgoers to a variety of flicks suitable for all ages across their five screens.

It marks the return to commercial movie entertainment 26 years after the closure of Swanwicks – Central Cinema (where Utah is now) on Society St. This cinema was the younger of the town – with the Plaza Cinema in the Town Hall running from 1920 to 1983 prior to being decommissioned. Incidentally the last movie shown in the Plaza was David Attenborough's "Ghandi" and the last one in Swanwicks was "The Man behind the Iron Mask".

The Omniplex group is an Irish company owned by the Anderson family, being the largest cinema group operating on the island with over 37 locations nationwide. The movie theatre in Ballinasloe, opposite Aldi, offers a capacity of 448 people, showcasing the latest major movie releases and changing screenings approximately every four to six weeks. Screen 1 offers a MAXX Recline service, with each seat being fitted with an electric recliner.

"Guardians of the Galaxy" was the Premiere Feature movie for the opening days, Directed by James Gunn. The cinema will be providing some 11 full/part time jobs operational, with the premises kicking off with a soft launch on May 12. Ballinasloe Omniplex Manager Jamie Harkins stated "We had a busy first weekend and, although we were hoping for it, we were unsure we would get it with the soft opening."

Jamie Harkins, an Athlone native, is a great fan of film, taking a particular liking to horror flicks, comedies, and the occasional action film.

Starting with Omniplex, just over a week before their launch date, he quickly got settled into his new role and brand-new state of the art facilities. He could sense the buzz from the staff and audiences alike with the new prospect to town and worked well with his team in catering to their eager and enthusiastic customers over the initial few days. "We are all new to this Omniplex but as far as a settling in period it was quick. The staff did Trojan work and really pulled together to



Ballinasloe Omniplex staff Katarzyna Wrobel, Amy Johnston, Matthew Murphy and Richard Geraghty pictured outside the cinema.

make it go as smoothly as possible" stated Jamie.

Regarding this new venture in his career, Jamie Harkins shared "I am excited to be managing the newest Omniplex, everything is state of the art, which is actually kind of funny because the style of the cinema is reminiscent of what I like to call the golden age of cinema. Working in the cinema industry is a passion more so than a job, it's in the blood, and to be attached to a cinema like this one, never mind one that is brand new, is like living a dream."

Ticket prices for the theatre start from €8.50 for a child and €10.00 for an adult. The MyOmniPass deal is also available enabling patrons to receive a ticket to every movie featured at the theatre for €14.99 per month, or a Family Pass including two adults and two children for €38. More information can be found on their website at www.omniplex.ie/cinema/ballinasloe.



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